
Brabazon, Tara
**Digital dieting: from information
obesity to intellectual fitness**
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I first heard Tara Brabazon speak at LILAC (Librarians Information Literacy Annual Conference) in 2008. It was an unforgettable experience. Eschewing PowerPoint and overheads, she spoke in an engaging, humorous and often confrontational style, peppering it with snatches from *Star Trek* and a random shout to ensure everyone was awake! Even more impressive, though, was the content of her presentation. Her arguments in favour of a more thoughtful and reasoning critical approach to what we then called the Google Generation were very cogent, and flew against what some in the profession were heralding as a new, literate and tech-savvy generation. These points were first laid out in *The University of Google: education in the post Information Age* (Ashgate, 2007). This new work takes those concerns a step further.

In the *University of Google*, she stated that 'Google is the internet equivalent of reality television: derivative, fast and shallow' (p. 8). In *Digital dieting: from information obesity to intellectual fitness* she is arguing for an overhaul of the whole approach taken by librarians, educationalists, academics and commentators to what information is and how it should be used, taught and studied. The refreshing approach of her thinking, for me, is her concern with the quality of what we are teaching students and what the impact of current trends is upon them. In the introductory argument she highlights her contact with one particular student who comes to her at the end of term, clearly having not read, nor looked at, the course material. When Tara approaches the reasons why, the student claims to have a disability in that he can't 'pay attention' to things. While this may elicit a humorous response, she argues that this is a natural outcome of some of the prevailing *Zeitgeist*, i.e. that of an emphasis on *sharing*, rather than *analysis* of information, or that 'more' is better.

This book is a passionate polemic, informed and necessary. While focusing on the implication for the student learning experience of 'digital obe-

sity' – the acceptance by many of us that more is better – it also addresses the implication for the global digital divide (if we in the developed world blandly build up this sort of approach, then the divide gets sharper). She is also passionate about the role of academic administrators and managers who, she feels, 'look for economically efficient solutions rather than thoughtful, relative, expedient... strategies for teaching and learning'. This has produced over the last two decades a group of university managers obsessed with technology but 'not aware of the consequences of their decisions' on students.

While she sees a clear and definite role for those of us in the library profession in tackling this issue, do not expect easy answers in the book. Tara aims to challenge us on a very profound level about what we mean by information literacy. Introducing university library apps for mobile devices may make us feel good, but are they just deepening the problem if we are abdicating responsibility for teaching how to look at them critically?

This work is highly recommended for anyone interested in the theory, practice and future of information literacy, or in teaching and technology.